

## OUTLINE FORMAT

The standard outline format has been developed for HABS reports to help insure that all important information is included and is readily accessible. This format is most efficient for individual structures. This section illustrates the outline format in detail, heading by heading, and discusses the material to be included under each heading. The format is flexible to suit a variety of circumstances. Omit or change the headings to suit the structure and the information available.

The outline is divided into five main sections: Identification Information, Historical Information, Architectural Information, Sources of Information, and Project Information. Standardized spacing and layout are used.

### Identification Information

**Name:** The name section includes the office name, the name of the structure, and the HABS number. See Assigning Name to Structure, above. Example:

#### HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PRIMARY NAME  
(Secondary Name)

HABS No. XX-###

**Location:** This includes the number and street, followed by corner or intersection if appropriate, city or town, county, and state. See Determining Location, above. This basic location should then be expanded, giving the general setting and orientation. Include compass direction that the structure faces (to clarify the description that follows), description of immediate environment, topography, and approaches.

A second paragraph gives the UTM coordinates, if known. Example:

16915 Avenida de Acacias, corner of Paseo Delicias,  
Rancho Santa Fe, San Diego County, California.  
Located on the southwest corner of Block G in the  
Civic Center of Rancho Santa Fe, the building faces  
east onto Paseo Delicias and south onto Avenida de  
Acacias.

USGS Rancho Santa Fe Quadrangle, Universal  
Transverse Mercator Coordinates:  
11.481055.3653250.

**Present Owner,  
Present Occupant,**

**Present Use:** These three items should present no difficulties. The first two may be combined if they are the same individual or group. Mention the address of the owner if it is different from that of the building. If a building is vacant, list that as its present use and eliminate the occupant category. For a demolished structure, name the last owner, occupant, and use, a statement that the structure was demolished, and the date of demolition. The occupant category can be omitted when recording structures such as monuments and memorials.

**Significance:** This statement is pithy and brief. It reflects the reasons that the structure was recorded, and covers both historical and architectural aspects of the structure and its relationship to its environment. Several sentences are adequate. Any statements made here are expanded in other sections of the report. A similar statement will appear on the title sheet of the drawings. Do not oversimplify and avoid such generalizations as "an example of the Victorian style." In fact, avoid simplistic and often meaningless terms such as Colonial or Victorian altogether.

## **PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

### **A. Physical History:**

1. **Date of erection:** Be as complete as possible. Mention sources of all dates cited. If found, give dates of plans, building permits, abrupt changes in tax assessments, cornerstone-laying ceremonies, completion or dedication dates, existence of a date stone, etc. If the date is unknown, state "Not known." If no exact date can be determined, but an estimate is possible, indicate by "ca." (for "circa") and state the source or reasons for making the estimate (stylistic basis, abrupt changes in value of property, local tradition, etc.).
2. **Architect:** If not known, state "Not known" or "None," as appropriate. If a structure has been traditionally or stylistically attributed to an architect, explain and give sources and reasons for the attribution. A brief biographic entry is appropriate here, especially if the architect is not well known or is a local figure. If the structure has a special place in the architect's development, include that in this section. Be aware of the difference between such statements as "built by" and "built for." When needed, this section can include information on master builders, landscape architects, artists, sculptors, muralists, etc. Place the appropriate titles with, or in place of, the title "Architect."
3. **Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:** The owners, occupants and uses have a varying degree of importance, depending on the kind of structure being documented. For some buildings, such as churches, this section is less important. For houses that are owner-occupied, only the owners need be charted. But for rental houses or commercial buildings, knowing the occupants or uses as well as the owners can be informative. Change the category as needed.

A chain of title is the best way to establish the owners, especially for rural buildings. The owners of urban buildings are often better documented through tax books, but the utility of either depends on the locality. A legal description of the property (lot and square number) should precede the list of owners.

The property need only be researched to the time of construction, or immediately before that. It is not necessary to trace the title of an 1890 building back to the land grant of 1740. If the tenants changed frequently during a particular time period, and these changes have not affected the structure, a brief summary of the occupants can be offered, such as "1915-35, numerous commercial enterprises."

4. **Builder, contractor, suppliers:** This section can include items such as the construction firm or the source of the building materials.

5. **Original plans and construction:** Include a capsule description of the structure's original appearance. Original drawings, perspectives, early views, etc., should be described. Contemporary descriptions from newspapers, contracts, letters, etc., can be quoted or summarized. Material from past residents or from physical examination of the structure may contribute to the narrative on its original appearance. Be sure to note all sources in this section. A comprehensive list of existing original documents and their location will be included in the Sources of Information.
6. **Alterations and additions:** Dates of alterations and additions are included here, along with a description of the changes and the person responsible. Deal with this material on a chronological basis, and devote a separate paragraph to each major change.

Not all information on alterations comes from documents; the building is your most important source here. Note if an alteration is based on physical evidence, and estimate the date, if possible, noting that it is an estimation. Use graphic sources as well; old photographs and drawings can be a valuable tool.

## **B. Historical Context:**

The context of a building can vary tremendously, and is essentially what you make it. This section might include a general history of the structure and provide information on persons and events connected with the structure. "Events" might be a major battle that took place on the property, or could include the uses of the building over time, or the uses of various rooms. Previous buildings on the site, if they have a bearing on the present one, and previous buildings of the same use, such as post offices and churches, can be important.

This section can also be used more expansively, and might examine the building's relationship to the surrounding area. If you are researching a farm building, you could investigate the agricultural history of the area, and discuss the relationship of farm to town and the growth of transportation routes. If it is an urban building, you could discuss the development of the neighborhood, or what certain businesses meant to a town. If it is a vernacular building, you could compare this one to similar types. If there is an overview report associated with the project, it may cover some of these more general topics, and this section would focus specifically on this building. Your supervisor will have suggestions on which direction to take this section.

## **PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

The purpose of the written architectural information is to supplement the information provided by the measured drawings and photographs. The written description repeats some of the information evident in the graphic material in order to analyze, interpret, and clarify, as well as covers facts not always included in the drawings or photographs, such as materials, construction techniques, mechanical systems, color, condition, etc. Remember that most researchers will not see the full-size drawings or original photographs, so some clarification may be necessary. Under each heading, the descriptions must be clear and concise, and cover all significant features, but do not describe in exacting detail what is better shown in the graphic material. Avoid lengthy verbal descriptions; instead, refer the researcher to the appropriate drawings or photographs. Identify the features and discuss their significance, instead of merely describing them. Some historical information may be appropriate when discussing particular features.

Any heading or part of a multiple heading that is not needed for a particular structure is omitted, just as any heading needed for a particular structure is added, such as exterior hardware, porte cochère, signs, etc. The following suggestions for what information can be included under each heading are intended only as guides. It is not necessary to include each fact for each structure. Allow the individual structure to determine what facts are necessary.

**A. General statement:**

1. **Architectural character:** This is a statement on the architectural interest or merit of the structure.
2. **Condition of fabric:** Give overall condition here and place information on specific features, like the roof, under the appropriate heading.

**B. Description of Exterior:**

1. **Overall dimensions:** The dimensions can be expressed in numbers (rounded to the nearest inch; front dimension given first) or in general terms, such as bays and stories (fenestrated attics count as a half story). Include layout and shape. Both main section and wings are included here.
2. **Foundations:** Include material, thickness, water table, etc.
3. **Walls:** Include overall finish materials and ornamental features on elevations, such as quoins, pilasters, belt courses, etc. When a building is stuccoed, also note the material underneath. Mention details such as the bond of a brick wall, whether the stone is laid randomly or in courses, the color and texture of the materials, the type and source of stone if known, etc.
4. **Structural system, framing:** A thorough description of the structural system is important, since this information is often not readily apparent. Note wall type (such as load-bearing, curtain wall, etc.), floor systems, and roof framing.
5. **Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads:** Describe materials, form, details, and location. Porch roofs should be discussed here, not in Roofs, below. Include a paragraph on each major porch; others can be described briefly.
6. **Chimneys:** Mention materials, number, form, and location.
7. **Openings:**
  - a. **Doorways and doors:** Include location, description, and trim.
  - b. **Windows and shutters:** Include fenestration, type (such as casement, two-over-two-light double-hung sash, etc.), sills, lintels, trim, and shutters. If there is a variety of windows, characterize them generally.
8. **Roof:**
  - a. **Shape, covering:** Include shape (gable, hip, gambrel, etc.) and materials.
  - b. **Cornice, eaves:** Include materials, form, notable features, and gutter

system.

- c. **Dormers, cupolas, towers:** Include number, location, and individual descriptions.

## C. **Description of Interior:**

- 1. **Floor plans:** Describe the general layout if there are drawings. If there are no drawings, be more specific. Start with the lowest floor and proceed to the top. If two or more floors are identical, combine the descriptions.

A drawing of the plan is recommended. If there are no HABS measured drawings of the building, simple floor plans can be included with the historical report. These can be simple, straightforward line drawings on an 8-1/2" x 11" sheet of paper, measured or not. Copies of original drawings can be included, or if original drawings are hard to read, traced from original drawings. Labels, north arrow, overall dimensions, source of information for the drawing, and date of the drawing are required. The plan should be attached at the end of the report, as part of the supplemental material (see Supplemental Material, below).

- 2. **Stairways:** Include location (if not mentioned above) and describe type, railing, balusters, and ornamental features.
- 3. **Flooring:** Include material, finish, and color. Describe width of boards and direction they run.
- 4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** Include finish materials, paneling, color, wallpaper, and decorative details of note. Mention location of specific features being discussed. In a highly finished building, you may want to describe the following on a room-by-room basis: baseboard (height, molding profile), wainscot (material), chair rail (height from floor, molding profile), wall (material), and cornice (molding profile).
- 5. **Openings:**
  - a. **Doorways and doors:** Include a description of the characteristic type found and individual descriptions of notable ones, including paneling, color, finish, and trim. Mention location of specific doors being discussed.
  - b. **Windows:** Include any notable interior window trim. Discuss natural lighting features and provisions for borrowing light from other interior spaces.
- 6. **Decorative features and trim:** Include woodwork not described above, cabinets, built-in features, fireplace treatments, and notable ornamental features. Mention materials and location of specific features being discussed.
- 7. **Hardware:** Describe original or notable hinges, knobs, locks, latches, window hardware, and fireplace hardware. Mention location of specific features being discussed.
- 8. **Mechanical equipment:**

- a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** Describe original and present systems, and any remaining devices of interest.
  - b. **Lighting:** Describe original lighting fixtures and those of interest. Mention location of each being discussed.
  - c. **Plumbing:** Describe original systems and any systems of interest.
  - d. **Use any appropriate heading:** Include any feature appropriate for the structure, such as elevators, call-bell systems, etc.
9. **Original furnishings:** Describe and locate any pieces of historical interest, such as furniture, draperies, carpets, etc., original to the structure.
- D. **Site:**
- 1. **Historic landscape design:** Include layout, character, plantings, and walks of original or historic landscape treatments. Historical information, such as dates of certain features, may be appropriate here.
  - 2. **Outbuildings:** Outbuildings will have separate reports if they are documented with drawings or isolated photographs. But if outbuildings are documented only as a minor part of the site, they are described in this section. Include a separate description of each outbuilding, including the location and function of each structure, and historical information if it has not been included above.

### **PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

This is an essential section of the historical report. It is important to refer the researcher to all pertinent sources. Be sure to include complete information on every source you locate and annotate the source with useful information, such as "includes reproductions of original drawings" or "discusses possible dates for structure."

- A. **Architectural drawings:** Include the date and location of the drawings and note anything significant, such as features not built as originally planned. Not only original drawings are useful; alteration drawings should be noted too.
- B. **Early Views:** Include photographs, engravings, etc. If known, specify medium, artist, date, publisher, and plate size. Give the location of the item and include information such as a negative number needed for ordering a copy. A note on the importance of the view is useful, such as "north front of church before tower was removed."
- C. **Interviews:** Include the name of the person interviewed, the date and place of the interview, and the person's association with the structure or site.
- D. **Bibliography:** If the written sources are extensive, you can divide them into primary and secondary, or unpublished and published. Unpublished materials should always be accompanied by their location. Include items such as deed books, inventories, censuses, tax records, insurance records, manuscripts, letters, historical society files, etc.
- E. **Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:** List here anything not referred to for this report,

but known or thought to contain further or related information.

- F. Supplemental Material:** Supplemental material can be graphic or written, and it is usually put at the very end of the report, but explained here. See Supplemental Material section.

#### **PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

This is a summary of those involved with preparing the documentation, including the measured drawings, photographs, and historical report. It includes the names and titles of those in the field and in the office who participated in the project, as well as the co-sponsors, and the date of the project. This statement is similar to the project statement on the title sheet of the measured drawings. If different sections of the report were written by different people, that is noted here. If substantial changes are made while editing the report in the office, the names of the editors are included. If there are particular people who helped the historian in the field, an acknowledgment can be made here.

HABS observes strict conventions concerning the appearance of the final product. Many of these will be added in the office, but it is helpful if you incorporate them as you go. In WordPerfect, the "indent" key (not the "tab") is essential for the outline format--use it! Certain lines are written in all capitals, as illustrated below. The final report is single-spaced. Following is a summary of the outline format.